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# Neglected Arabia



QUARTERLY LETTERS AND NEWS

OF THE

# ARABIAN MISSION



NUMBER FIFTY-FIVE, JULY-SEPTEMBER, 1905

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# MISSIONARY LETTERS AND NEWS FROM ARABIA.

July-September, 1905.

## IN THE SHADOW OF ISLAM.

MRS. A. K. BENNETT.

In a recent article in "The Student Movement" the writer quoted the following advice of an old missionary to those who had volunteered to work in foreign fields: "Keep your eyes and ears open and your mouth shut during your first two years abroad. Don't give utterance to the criticisms which rise to your lips about missionary methods and failings of fellow-missionaries until time has sifted your opinions."

This is certainly good advice, for, although one's first impressions may be lasting, one's ideas and opinions vary with experience. But if this counsel was given to prevent harsh criticism, so long a "sifting" time seems hardly necessary for the worker in a Mohammedan land, because the difficulties from the beginning are so apparent that unfavorable criticisms, if any exist, upon those who have toiled several years in such infertile soil, soon give place to words of praise that even a few seeds have been planted from which the fruit has appeared.

The religion of Islam, which we have come to combat, has been aptly compared to a mountain, and, as it looms up before us, casting its shadow over so many lives, we long and pray for the "mustard-seed faith" that it may be removed and give place to "the Rock of our Salvation."

### THE NEW TONGUE.

One of the first difficulties which the new missionary must face in any foreign country is, naturally, the native language, and it is doubtless a great advantage to the work that one cannot rush into service immediately upon entering the field, for the two years of language study give the missionary time and opportunity to learn the peculiar mind and customs of the people among whom he is to spend his life.

So much has already been said about the difficulties of the Arabic language that I think I hardly need to assert my belief that few who attempt to master it will ever "sigh for more worlds to conquer." Still, it is a fascinating study, and the most interesting lessons of the week are the conversational lessons with the native women. As often as possible I go, either alone or with Miss Lutton, to visit the women in their homes. They are, almost without exception, hospitable and kind, and are polite enough to overlook all mistakes without a smile.

#### WOMEN'S WAYS.

In these visits we have come in contact with women of all classes, the rich and the poor, the well and the sick, the careless and the careworn. They often ask Miss Lutton to read to them, and then, perhaps, in the midst of a serious talk about Christ and His life, one of them will point to her pin and ask, "Is that gold?" or some such trivial question, plainly indicating how little attention has been given to the message.

For several weeks one of the Arab women, with one or two of her servants, has been coming to our Friday afternoon prayer meeting, and then, after the service, she has invited us very cordially to go home with her. A few weeks ago she came as usual and asked us to go, but as we were unable to do so that afternoon, we declined her pressing invitation, giving our reasons, and telling her we would go the next Friday. She was very much offended, and said: "Well, then, you don't love us." We replied that we did love them very much, and that we would surely keep our promise.

When the next Friday came, our Arab friend did not appear, so we decided to go to the house and see what the trouble was. As we entered the courtyard one of the servants met us and told us that they were all angry with us for not coming the week before, but we went on to the room where the women gather to talk, sew, and drink coffee, and gave our "salaams" to the lady of the house and the other women, as we always do, but instead of the usual hearty reception, we were greeted with, "We are angry with you." We could not help admiring their frankness, and we were sure that their wrath was of such a nature that it could be appeased; so we stayed and talked with them for some time, sang a few hymns—the favorite ones being "Jesus



Loves Me" and "Come to Jesus"—and then, after drinking coffee with them, we left, feeling that they once more were our friends.

Some of the women are rude and coarse, but many of them possess a grace and beauty which make them most attractive.

Knowing what a factor the home is in the life of any people, we feel more and more the importance of bringing Christ to the Arab women, that the shadow of Islam may be shortened and the homes of Arabia "filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea."

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### AMONG THE MA'DAN ARABS.

REV. JOHN VAN ESS.

If you look at the map of Mesopotamia you will see an inverted triangle formed on the one side by the Tigris, on the other by the Euphrates, and having as its irregular base the Shatt-el-Hai. For years and years British river steamers have skirted this triangle on the Tigris side, and the well-dressed European sitting on the decks has always carried away as his strongest impression of this river trip the hordes of savage Arabs which, in the fall, crowd the banks, screaming after the ship, fighting with one another for the dates and bread thrown to them as alms, and performing grotesque dances for the amusement of the passengers.

The Euphrates side of the triangle is too shallow for steam traffic, yet hundreds of native craft yearly ply its waters as far up as old Kufa. No day passes without its tale of robbery and bloodshed, for the triangle Arabs, finding sailboats an easier prey than the "smoke-boat," do not hesitate to take a heavy toll in plunder and blood. For a stretch of eighty miles, from Gurna on, the Euphrates is especially dangerous, for, through the wanton neglect of the Turkish government, it has run into a huge marsh, the channel being marked only by a narrow path through the high reeds. In the spring, when the water is high, the Arabs lurk in the reeds, ten, twenty and thirty canoes together, each holding five men. When a boat comes skimming along, if under full sail, the mast is deftly shot away, and in the confusion that follows the canoes dart out, plunder and kill, if need be, and swiftly retire into the marsh, whither none can or dare follow. If there be no wind, or if the wind be contrary and the sailors are lazily rowing or punting along, the boat is an easier prey for the pirate.

The traveller who is seen to be unarmed or insufficiently armed finds himself suddenly pelted by a hail of Martini bullets, and, before he can collect his thoughts, stripped of all his belongings, thankful if life is mercifully left him. Dead men tell no tales.

Such Arabs inhabit this triangle of country—cut-throats, every one. They are called Ma'dan or, by some, Beni Ma'ad, and are held in such contempt that to call a Muntefik Arab from Nasariyeh a Ma'eidi is to invite a brawl. No white man has ever penetrated their country, and for a Turk to attempt it would be suicidal.

#### REASONS FOR THE JOURNEY.

Why, then, did I try it?

1. Because I believe the cross can and should always precede the flag. For two years past rumors have been rife of an attempt to make the cut from Amara to Shattra by foreign exploring parties. Eight months ago one party tried and failed. Three months ago the French made the same trial and were stopped by the Turks. With pardonable pride we can know that the Stars and Stripes tried and went through, and with it and over it the banner of the cross.

2. With life so short and such a large section entirely on my shoulders and conscience; with high water, cool weather, good health, now, if ever, was the chance. To prove that an unarmed gospel can go farther than an armed government, I took the chance.

3. Six months ago I had the privilege of travelling to Bombay with Sir W. Willcocks, one of the foremost British irrigation engineers, who had been prospecting as far up as Bagdad for an irrigation syndicate. Partly at his request, and partly to satisfy my own curiosity, I determined to collect as many data as possible which might have a scientific value.

#### THE START.

On the first of May we started from Nasariyeh, our out-station on the Euphrates, where I had been spending a month. The party consisted of a captain, two sailors, myself and cook, a Syrian Jacobite. The first day up the Shatt-el-Hai was uneventful, along a route well travelled and safe. Unfortunately, owing to a dam, our boat grounded about a mile down the stream. With the sun already low, I did not relish the idea of spending the night in that wild plain, so pushed on afoot to persuade the keepers of the dam to open long enough to

give my boat sufficient water to pull up. There were two of them, armed with rifles, and already in an ugly temper owing to two boats of Turks who had been jollyng for a passage for three hours past. At last, by duly impressing upon them my friendship with the pasha at Nasariyeh, and after many a threat and some scuffling, with an oath they broke away a corner of the mud dam. After two hours the boat hove in sight.

At sunrise the dam was entirely demolished, and we proceeded to Shattra, a large and thriving town, and a center of trade with the Arabs. It was now about five in the afternoon and we had still about three hours to go when the rain drops began to fall. Long before sunset the sky was black and a fresh wind blowing us against the bank, impeding our progress. At nine we reached Shattra but, owing to the wind, could not cross, as the river is wide and deep at this time of the year, and our poles could not touch bottom. So we concluded to tie fast until the wind should die down a trifle.

#### A WILD NIGHT.

Utterly fatigued, we all soon fell asleep in the boat. At midnight I was awakened by a loud clap of thunder. The wind had veered, and was blowing a hurricane, and the boat madly tossing about. From the peculiar motion I could feel that the stern had become loosened and that in a few minutes the bow, too, would give way, and we might be driven to the other side, probably to be upset or crushed by collision with the boats on the opposite shore. I called loudly to the captain to get up and tie fast, but he was already awake, shivering with fear, and his only reply was to lie whining and calling on Allah for help. On leaving Nasariyeh a friendly Turk had pressed a 44-calibre Smith-Wesson revolver into my hand. Why I took it I don't know, but there it was, and at the captain's head. Thus persuaded, he called the sailors and crept out to the shore, lashing the bow firmly around his waist. The wind was howling fiercely, peal on peal of thunder crashed through the sky, the rain fell in torrents, and there in the bow of the boat crouched your missionary, with rain-soaked khakis, keeping the sailors at their posts with a revolver. It was incongruous, and I laughed in the black night, for I imagined how I would have looked in an American pulpit in that attitude. And so we waited drearily till morning, when we crossed and settled in the khan.

## AN UNGUARDED PROCEEDING.

After a few days I broached the subject of crossing the triangle to the local governor, but was met with a blunt refusal. He avowed that four regiments of soldiers could not pass that way, that I would be summarily butchered, etc. All he could do was to give me a guard to Hataman, a small trading-post twenty miles inland. So I concluded to take that and trust to fortune to get away from Hataman. The guard, however, did not come, and, secretly glad to be free of their scrutiny, in the early morning of May 6th we floated past the governor's house and a few miles down entered the Bed'a, a small stream leading inland. For eight hours we followed its devious course, until it led into a large inland lake, at this time of the year deep, and fully four miles wide.

At four in the afternoon we reached Hataman, a village of mud huts, governed by a mudir. He is a fatherly old Arab, a Bagdadi by birth, and proverbially hospitable. When I stated my errand he frowned and called a council of the leading Arabs to consider the proposal. The unanimous verdict was that the light-haired Franjy would be too marked a specimen even in native dress, and that it would be better to return whence I had come, especially since the desert was hot and full of hardship, the Beni Lam up in arms, etc., etc. But I was obstinate, said that my opinion of Arab hospitality had received a rude shock, and that whatever hardships were ahead could not last longer than two days, which was not prohibitive. Finally a young Arab agreed to take me a roundabout way under cover of darkness, to act as guide, and cast me on the mercies of Mithkal Sheikh of the Beni Said at the edge of the desert, to all of which I agreed except the night part. It was finally decided to start at the first streaks of dawn. After supper the mudir kindly took me for a walk in the desert, and then a two-hours' talk at the door of his hut, while the Arabs gathered and plied me with questions about Frankistar. As evidence of our genius in machinery, a Dover egg beater was produced, used by the mudir for making butter in small quantities. He had just brought it from Bagdad. Amid the "ajeeps" of the bystanders it was pronounced a marvel.

## DISTURBED SLUMBERS.

After the guests had departed I tried to sleep, but for a long time

would continually start up at the clank of a chain near my head. At first I thought it was a mare tethered at the door, until closer inspection revealed a prisoner firmly shackled by the ankles. Later the mudir told me he had been too free with his gun, and said he tried these measures to impress upon the culprit the advisability of a judicious use of firearms.

At dawn I was awakened by a servant who brought tea and a small piece of Arab bread. After a short delay the horses were brought, my cook and I mounted, the guide followed afoot, and with loud cries of "Ya Allah," we turned our faces into the desert.

#### IN THE DESERT.

Sand! sand! sand!—everywhere sand! and as the sun rose higher the glare became blinding; but I drew my kafiah well over my eyes and experienced little discomfort, except from my horse, which was blind on his port side, and persisted in drifting to starboard. Vigorous kicks in the ribs were of no avail, the beast would only "heist," as the boys used to say, and keep on drifting, until I tied the left rein short to the saddle horn, and, thus properly "reefed in," he kept the course. I hope that horse is dead now—he spoiled incipient spiritual thoughts.

Troops of gazelles skimmed by, and ever and anon in the distance small oases of grass would appear with small flocks of sheep feeding on them. The guide would invariably make a detour of these, fearing, he said, that we would be taken for soldiers going to collect the sheep tax, and that would mean a fusillade and a scamper. High mounds, all that remain of some ancient Chaldean city, were scattered about, each in turn serving as a landmark, and behind each in turn the guide promised that we should see the black tents of Mithkal.

#### ARAB GUIDES.

When an Arab points with his beard and says, "There it is," depend on it you have still a day to travel; when he says he sees it, six hours is a low figure; when he claims to smell the camp coffee, three hours at least. Fortunately I did not know that then. And so, buoyed up with false hopes, we crept on, watering our horses at one place from a brackish pool left by the rain. At four in the afternoon the guide registered an oath by my head that behind the next landmark we would see our goal. We passed the mound, met a wan-

dering Arab, and found that Mithkal had moved two days to the south. But on we went, hoping to find some shelter, to seek Mithkal any more being now out of the question.

On the horizon loomed a small camp, and thither we rode, and found to our joy that it was one of Mithkal's tents left behind for some of the horses and slaves. But the slaves seemed shy of me, and advised me to hurry on to the edge of the desert, a distance of three hours, where Sheikh Ismail might entertain us. So on again, hoping to reach Ismail before dark. But my horse now began to hang his head low, and the other to stumble painfully. At that rate we could hope to make no progress; and then, thank God! behind a slight elevation we spied a group of tents, to which we turned for shelter.

#### A HOSPITABLE SHEIKH.

The sheikh came out to meet us, took my reins, and as I jumped from the saddle salaamed me warmly, and handing the horse to a servant, led the way into the tent. The sun was still hot, but the cover of goats' hair gave sufficient shelter, and I stretched my weary limbs, thankful for so much of the journey over. The tribe soon gathered, the sheikh roasted, pounded and brewed the coffee at the door of the tent, and before long we were chatting in a friendly manner. I shall long remember with gratitude the gaunt Sheikh Nasif, rude and rough, but a gentleman at heart. To-day, as I sit in my room at Busrah, I can still imagine myself back in that camp, can still see the travelling Persian merchant measuring out yards and yards of red and white Manchester cloth, the women busily pounding grain, and can still hear the rustle of the whispering "Sarahs" peeping at me through a hole in the flap that separated us from the harem.

At nightfall the horses were gathered and tethered in a circle within the camp, the fires were lighted and supper served—rice, a chicken, and a bowl of water. Careful questioning as to our whereabouts, aided by rough observations taken by a pocket compass, revealed the fact that we were then seventy-five miles due east from Jilat Sikr on the Shatt-el-Hai. The sheikh gave me choice of sleeping in the tent or under the stars. For various reasons I chose to sleep in the open, and so my blanket was spread on the sand, and a coarse camels' hair pillow swarming with fleas given for my bed. I slept soundly that night despite the dew, which by morning had the effect of

fine rain. At the first streak of dawn I was awakened by the bustle and stir of the women breaking camp. Tents were down and rolled up, and all were waiting the sheikh's word to move.

And now the guide from Hataman became sullen, and demanded more "backsheesh." He did not know the rest of the way; he was afraid to go farther, as there was a blood-feud on between his tribe and the marsh Arabs. But after the promise of a mejidie (80 cents) he consented, and we mounted and rode on, not to Ismail, as I first intended, but to Hassan-el-Hakkam, as canoes were more likely to be found there. Three hours brought us to the edge of the swamp where sat poor Hassan, drowned out by the recent rains, smoking a disconsolate water-pipe. There the guide left us, after vainly trying to extort more backsheesh, to the tender mercies of the drowned-out sheikh.

#### SHORT RATIONS.

It was now ten in the morning of Monday, and the needs of the inner man began to make themselves felt. Since the evening of Saturday we had had only one meal, and that at short rations. Sheikh Hassan had anticipated my needs, however, and announced that after dinner I should be free to begin my swamp journey. With eager eyes I watched for the coming platter, and when it came my heart sank—a huge slab of rice-bread baked in dung-ashes, hard as leather, and a decayed fish which gave notice of its presence from afar. I fell to for hospitality's sake and tried to be happy, but it was a failure. The mud-like slab would not go down, so to give the appearance of appreciation I slipped a huge chunk into my pocket, which I later shied at a mud-turtle. The fish still haunts me. A canoe was promised when the sun should have declined a little, and so we drearily waited in the goats'-hair tent, gasping for air in that low-lying hollow, while the desert-flies stung like needles.

#### CANOEING.

At four in the afternoon an old woman announced that her canoe was now at my service, so my box was shouldered, or, rather, "headed," and after a brief salaam we left Sheikh Hassan to complain of his hard luck, and started across the swamp. It was really a beautiful ride—no longer hot, the water fine and clear, the air fragrant with the odor of many marsh flowers, while gorgeous birds started

up at our approach. For three hours we paddled steadily on, and then on asking whither I was being taken I was abruptly told that, on account of a recent feud, we should have to make a wide detour and, instead of going to Sheikh Soleima, were to be cast on Sheikh Mussellem. Just as the sun sank in the west Mussellem's camp hove in sight, the first of the real Ma'dan. Here and there a canoe lay idly swinging at its rope of twisted reeds, but for the rest, not a soul in sight, when all of a sudden we turned a corner and the canoe was cleverly beached in front of the sheikh's hut, lapped on four sides by water.

Mussellem himself stepped forward, a huge, half-naked savage, with hair to his shoulders. As he gave me his hand I said, "Dakhil," and he quietly led the way into his hut. But no sooner had I become seated than the whole tribe gathered, looking like so many water-rats—children entirely naked, women half, and men entirely, except for a breech-cloth. The hut was filled to suffocation, men, women, children crowding closer and closer, and still coming. The first word the sheikh said was, "You are a deserting officer of the Turkish army." He no doubt had good reasons for his suspicions, as my cook resembled a soldier, and with my gaiters and khakis and white head-dress, I looked considerably like some hard-luck lieutenant.

#### BRISK MEDICAL PRACTICE.

At a word from the sheikh the hut was at once cleared and we were left alone. After five minutes the sheikh and five men filed in, pointed at my box, and demanded to know its contents. I assured him that it contained medicine, that I was a travelling doctor seeking to please Allah by treating the sick free. So he brought forward a gray-headed villain writhing in the agonies of colic, and said he would test my skill. Fortunately I had a bottle of morphine pills in my kit, and in five minutes the patient was calmly sleeping at my feet. My "skill" was indicated, and in a trice all the lame, blind and halt were summoned. The varieties of diseases treated by my twelve medicines would put an American practitioner to shame. Bicarbonate of soda, tonic and calomel, quinine and zinc sulphate, iodine, boracic acid and bromide covered the ground of the whole British pharmacopœia.

At last the sheikh cried "Enough," ordered the crowd to disperse, and when they lingered, vigorously scattered them hither and thither



with his huge fists and feet. Then for an hour we sat in front of the door of the hut on a mat, while two hundred of the tribe gathered in a close semicircle about me. In the background herds of water-buffaloes snorted in the water. An old woman came up, gingerly touched my glasses, and asked if I had been born with them on. A huge savage whom I had noticed came in with the sheikh when I was asked to open my box, put his finger on my heart, and slowly said: "We had made up our minds to stab you there, but when we found you were a doctor we concluded to wait. Now you are safe, and we trust you." Cheering words, those! I quizzically asked whether my "dakhil" had not assured my safety, but he only answered, "We are Ma'dan."

#### A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE.

Then the sheikh made a proposition. He would build me a hut, give me his niece, a girl of fourteen, to wife, and I must stay among them. The crowd murmured in approval. The bride would be brought next morning and the ceremonies at once performed. I thanked the sheikh for his kindness, assured him that I would be proud to be his nephew, but that there was one great obstacle at present—my medicine was nearly gone. If he would treat me well and give me a canoe next morning, and help me on my way, I would proceed to Amasa, replenish my stock of drugs, and if God willed, return. And I do want to return if the church will provide the doctor. My excuse seemed reasonable, and Musellem promised to let me go.

#### THE ROYAL MINSTREL.

After a hearty supper of buffalo milk and rice, an entertainment was planned for my benefit. The "bucks" of the tribe gathered, and filled the hut to overflowing. In the center a bunch of reeds was kept burning for light, and at my side stood the performer. He sang of the deeds of his fathers, then of the disgrace of Sheikh Seihud, who two weeks before had been routed with a loss of two hundred men in an invasion into these parts. Then the singer sang of my virtues and "skill"; I was tall and supple as a marsh reed, my eyes the eyes of a young buffalo, etc., etc. (Let the Board of Trustees take notice—examine your next candidate for buffalo eyes). It was a strange sight, the rush-fire fitfully lighting up the savage countenances, the antics of the singer, while the water-pipe kept going the rounds.

## THE MISSIONARY HEART.

And then I thought—and started at the thought—are these also my brethren? Must I love even these, and if need be give my life to reclaim them? Yes, if Christ died for me, for no greater sacrifice than His was ever made. Oh, Church of the living God! in what are you better than these children of nature? Your good clothes, your education, which is, sadly enough, mostly of head and little of heart, your morals, your manners? Does He regard clothes, or a little Latin and Greek, or a code of morals or Chesterfieldian manners? Saved by grace and enlightened because we had the chance—no merit to us. The rush-light dimmed and died, but not so will the loving God quench the smoking flax.

That night I slept next to the plunder taken from Seihud a fortnight before. At dawn I asked permission to go; my box was hauled out, the canoe brought up, and when I wanted to embark a bear-like Ma'eidi quietly seated himself on my box and refused to let it go, saying it was to be held as a guarantee of my return. But the chief rudely kicked the intruder away and we were off, to be cast on the hospitality of Kheinuba two hours down. We passed up the small stream which here has separated itself from the marsh, past miles and miles of huts, and at last into the open lake beyond. The canoe was small, the wind had risen and the waves were high; the water came in by bucketfuls, and I had already begun to calculate whether I could swim to the opposite shore now looming up in the haze. But a Ma'eidi is a skilled canoeist, and he reached Kheinuba.

## ON TO THE FORT.

About half a mile from his hut we grounded the canoe to stop a leak, and then I bribed the big paddler in the stern to go on to the next camp, four hours away, where I had heard was a Nejdi chief, Yuseph, who had settled among the Ma'dan. A Nejdi is always an honorable host, less treacherous than the Ma'dan, and this particular one the most powerful chief in the whole district. We threw out the guide from Mussellem, gave him a tin tobacco box and told him to be quiet, and sped on to Yuseph. Then the canoe turned into a rapid, turbulent river, on and on till Yuseph's fort came into view—a huge mud structure bearing marks of the recent fracas. We landed opposite; I got out and walked into the "mudhif" and sat in the guests' place.

The whole concourse rose to salaam. I at once asked for a cigarette, and was safe, according to all rules of Arab etiquette. I think St. Paul himself would not have let a cigarette stand in the way under similar circumstances. Although they speculated among themselves, and audibly, as to my identity and business, some questioned me directly. A young Arab swore that he knew me as a distinguished officer of the Turkish army, and to this was attributed my Arabic brogue. Feigning weariness, I lay down and slept to prevent further questioning. After a hearty dinner of rice and mutton, a canoe was brought up, three armed men were sent with us as guard, and we left Yuseph's camp.

#### UNDER THE TURKISH FLAG.

Up the river, hour after hour, past mud forts recently shot to pieces, till near sunset the Turkish flag greeted our eyes and we reached a military outpost of the government. Never before was I so glad to see the star and crescent, for it meant, at any rate, safety—and bread. The mudir heartily welcomed us, brought tea, brought supper, and then we climbed to the roof of his mud-fort, for the air was close. Then he told me of the great battle of the chiefs, how for ten days and nights the fusillade continued, at night lighting up the sky like lightning, till at last Seihud retired, his power broken, his canoes shattered and the flower of his tribe slaughtered. I could have hugged that kindly Turk—no better host ever bade me welcome in an American parlor. A thunder-shower drove us from the roof, and that night I slept regardless of fleas and mosquitoes, happy that so much of the journey was over. The next morning I left in a large canoe with towering bow, taking no guard, as the way was said to be safe—twenty-five miles to Amara. With us embarked an Arab woman with four children and an infant. The sun was hot, the dried skins in the canoe at my head fearfully odorous, the flies tortured, but Amara was near, and we minded nothing. About ten miles below Amara the Mujer-es-Saghir joins the Tigris with a rush.

#### KIDNAPPERS.

At its mouth we tied fast to the bank to get some milk from a lowly cowherd, and the woman got out and walked along the bank, carrying the infant. Suddenly six Arabs, armed with rifles, appeared from the tall grass and came straight to the canoe. They parleyed

for a few minutes, then walked off in the direction the woman had taken, who was now a hundred yards ahead on the bank. Suddenly I heard a scream, and looking up, saw the six Arabs scampering off through the grass, carrying the infant, waving their rifles and shouting a wild chant. The woman came running up and said the child had been kidnapped for a debt which her father owed one of the Arabs. They had traced us from the fort and seized the opportunity when we had tied to the bank. The Arabs were now far away in the grass, and we could only faintly hear their yells in the distance, so we concluded to push on to Amara and report the matter to the authorities. So on we crept again. Every few rods Arabs would come to the bank and ask of Seihud's whereabouts. They had deserted him in his extremity, and were in hourly fear that he would return to slaughter them. At four p. m. we reached Amara, tired and hot, but happy, for the missionary and not a government expedition had drawn a fine red line across the blank space on the map.

#### THE GAINS.

Of what benefit was the trip into the wild country?

1. It proves that the Ma'edi can be reached in his home, and that it is safe to go among them, if the church will send out a young, healthy doctor, handy with the knife, who loves a little of Bohemian life for six months a year—the grandest opportunity ever offered a young man to mould a whole people, numbering thousands, into the image of Christ.

2. I have an inkling that we are on the right clue to successful missionary work in Turkey. The government officials at Amara now believe me when I say that our motto is, "Glory to God and love to man." Islam contains no such element.

3. The course of two rivers was traced and roughly mapped, soil examined, antiquities located, peculiarities of language and customs noted—all interesting side issues which may some day be of value in the regeneration of Mesopotamia.

BUSRAH, Turkey, July 31st, 1905.

## POLITICAL HAPPENINGS.

REV. JAMES E. MOERDYK.

The Bahrein Islands are governed by an independent Arab sheikh. The present sheikh's rule dates back to about 1875. The British, alone of foreign governments, have an agent here. Some have said that the islands have become a British protectorate, but others object to this term. Whatever may be the term used on paper, past and recent events teach us to say that Britain insists on being the sheikh's agent in transactions with foreigners, and that foreigners may depend upon the British agent's services in all complaints and grievances against the sheikh or his subjects.

## LABOR TROUBLES.

In October of last year a petty sheikh of considerable wealth and standing in the town of Menamah entered the workhouse of a German merchant in search of coolies for his work. This means that he intended forcing the coolies to leave their work for the German and to work for him the remainder of the day—and that without pay. As soon as the merchant became aware of the trouble between the coolies and the sheikh's men, he came to interfere and ordered the sheikh and his men to leave the premises. One of the sheikh's men struck the merchant upon the head, inflicting a slight wound, but so provoking the merchant that he complained at the British agent's office, demanding the punishment of the sheikh and of the men who assaulted him.

A month or more after this there was trouble again in the bazaar. This time the servants and slaves of the sheikh above mentioned attacked the Persian shopkeepers and coolies. Several of the Persians were hurt—two very badly, and one almost killed—and these also brought their complaint to the British agent. In December the British Resident from Bushire came to confer with the ruling sheikh and insisted on an investigation and public trial before the sheikh and himself. After the trial, which resulted in establishing the offence of the petty sheikh and his servants, the Resident recommended as penalty a cash fine, the public flogging of the sheikh's servants, and that the sheikh himself leave the islands for a season and live somewhere outside of Bahrein. The ruling sheikh consented to the fine and flogging in the case of the German merchant, but refused in the case of

the Persians, and would not consent to the temporary banishment of his relative, the petty sheikh. Finally, the petty sheikh promised to absent himself for three weeks while the British Resident returned to confer with his government about the final terms of settlement.

#### VIGOROUS PROCEEDINGS.

It was not until February and March that the Resident again visited here, but he then came, bringing with him two gun-boats and one armed cruiser. Two or three days were spent in placing the men-of-war and in other preliminaries. One gun-boat was anchored in the channel between the two largest islands, with her guns trained on the sheikh's forts, a second was anchored in the bay before the town of Menameh so as to cover the offending sheikh's house and the bazaar of the town, while the cruiser was anchored farther out where she could train her guns upon both islands and settlements. Then, after the usual official calls, an ultimatum was sent the ruling sheikh demanding the surrender of the offending parties and punishment as before suggested. There was just a little excitement among the Arabs when they began to appreciate how serious things were. And the sheikh delayed his answer until the last moment, so that even the blue-jackets and marines anticipated a bit of sport in the use of their big guns and in landing to assault the forts. But there was no trouble, for the sheikh agreed to all the terms of the ultimatum. But when search was made for the person of the petty sheikh he could not be found. A son of the ruling sheikh was then taken aboard one of the gun-boats as a hostage until further search should be made. Marines landed and took possession of the house of the guilty sheikh. All his property was confiscated—furniture of the house and two boats burnt in the harbor, his horses and camels and other movable property taken to be sold in Bushire, and himself declared an outlaw.

After three more days of waiting, during which time the Resident had many conferences with the sheikh and interviewed several other influential Arabs who were inclined to "lord it" over the common people, the Resident returned to Bushire, leaving one gun-boat to care for the outlaw if he returned, or until his place of hiding should be established. It was soon learned that he had escaped to the mainland and had taken refuge among friends. He remained in hiding until eight or ten days ago, when he returned to surrender to the British

and declared his willingness to go into exile for as long a term as they thought best.

#### BENEFICIAL RESULTS.

The effect of this little episode and interference of the British has, on the whole, proved wholesome. There are many Arabs who complain, and claim the sheikh has been abused, and that foreigners ought not to interfere in the affairs of the Arabs. But many others, who have long complained of the sheikh and his selfish treatment of his subjects, rejoice that Britain has interfered and asserted herself for righteous government. Two notices having the seal of the sheikh and signature of the British representative have since appeared. One forbids all "forced labor" of servants or employees of foreign residents; the other advises foreign subjects who own property in the islands to have their title-deeds registered in the British Agency, so that double sales of the same property, as has happened heretofore, shall be impossible. The Arabs have learned that all persons, whether foreigners or natives to the place, have equal rights to come and go in the islands as they pursue their lawful business.

#### GREATER FREEDOM FOR WORK.

As to ourselves and our work, it does not mean that the people respect our religion more than before, nor do they listen better, but most of the open opposition and abuse seems to have disappeared. We can come and go quite freely into all the villages, expecting a decent reception, and men who would not recognize us before, perhaps because of fear of the people or rulers, now consent to talk quite sensibly. They knew before that we had come to stay, but now it seems right that some take the trouble to examine our books and consider our claims.

#### WAR IN THE PENINSULA.

During the greater part of last year there was war in the interior of the peninsula. The Arabs of the south, belonging to the ancient family of Ibn Saood, were fighting with those of the north, belonging to the family of Ibn Rasheed. Those from the south proved victorious and succeeded in driving the Ibn Rasheed faction from their capital, Hail, who fled into the mountains and sent a request to the Turks to help them, or at least to intercede for them. The Turks

succeeded in arranging for a meeting of all parties concerned where affairs might be freely discussed and arrangements concluded for a settlement. This meeting took place during the early part of the year, and it was there agreed that fighting must cease and all parties return to their homes, and that the Turks send soldiers to garrison certain towns in central Arabia and thus prevent a renewal of hostilities. This agreement was hardly mutual, but the Turks appear to have obliged the southern Arabs to subscribe to the terms. Some three months ago two towns situated in the territory between the capitals of the two factions were thus garrisoned by Turkish soldiers, with a governor for each place. A few other towns of minor importance were designated as quarters for smaller companies of soldiers. The result of all this means a victory for the Turkish party, and although it may—for a time at least—insure a cessation of that eternal fighting among the Arab families, few think it assures progress and liberty to the land. Arabia has practically never yet been an open country, but the Turks have proved themselves greater obstacles to the "open door" than have the Arabs.





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